MARVELS™ BOOK 0

MARVELS™

KURT BUSIEK

Oh, look.

Another one of those *Zero* issues. One of those things comics publishers put out to suck more money out of your pockets. What's in this one – a secret origin? A key story that won't be told in the regular series? A set of trading cards you've got to have to understand anything?

Not this time.

There's nothing in this issue that you *need*. If you have MARVELS #1-4, you have it all – the whole story, the whole series. This is just the behind-the-scenes stuff that made everyone nuts enough to do this project in the first place – the incredible artwork by Alex Ross that *we* all got to see and be stunned by, but which most of you have only gotten a glimpse of, if you've seen it at all.

So no, you don't need this.
But I bet you *want* it...

✦

For me, it started with OPEN SPACE, a science-fiction anthology I was editing. I saw Alex's work in a book put out by another publisher, thought, "Ooh, I gotta get this guy!"I tracked Alex down and hired him to paint a story for issue #5 – a lovely, unfortunately never-to-be-published story – shortly after he was done, the series was canceled. With #4.

Continued inside back cover...

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"É COM CONSIDERÁVEL DIFICULDADE QUE ME LEMBRO DA ERA ORIGINAL DO MEU SER..."

— Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

HORTON.

PHINEAS
THOMAS
HORTON.

POSSIVELMENTE,
O MAIOR
CIENTISTA DE
SUA ÉPOCA.

ELE FOI MEU PAI.

O NÚMERO DE SUAS DESCOBERTAS SUPEROU, EM MUITO, AS DE SEUS CONTEMPORÂNEOS.

ANOS À FRENTE DE SEU TEMPO, O CONHECIMENTO AVANÇADO DE HORTON SOBRE AÇO E MATERIAIS SINTÉTICOS, SOMADO A UMA GRANDE COMPREENSÃO DA MENTE HUMANA, O TORNARAM OBJETO DA INVEJA E DO PRECONCEITO DA COMUNIDADE CIENTÍFICA.

PARA ELE, A CIÊNCIA ERA O MEIO PELO QUAL ALCANÇARIA SEU MAIOR OBJETIVO: DESVENDAR OS SEGREDOS MAIS PROFUNDOS DA PRÓPRIA CRIAÇÃO.

ENQUANTO ENFRENTAVA O CETICISMO E A ZOMBARIA DE SEUS COLEGAS, HORTON CONCENTRAVA SEUS ESFORÇOS EM SEU OBJETIVO MAIOR.

TODOS OS SEUS ANOS DE TRABALHO CULMINARAM EM MIM.

NÃO LEMBRO EXATAMENTE, MAS, EM MEU PRIMEIRO MOMENTO DE LUCIDEZ, ALGO INESPERADO

ACONTECEU.

DEVIDO A ALGUMA FALHA EM MINHA CONCEPÇÃO ORIGINAL, MEU CORPO TEVE UMA REAÇÃO INCENDIÁRIA AO ENTRAR EM CONTATO COM O AR.

Mesmo assim, permaneci completamente ileso. E, tão logo o suprimento de oxigênio foi cortado...

...o efeito destrutivo cessou, e retornei ao meu estado original de inércia.

Os primeiros a me ver ficaram aterrorizados com minha habilidade peculiar.

Phineas Horton era como um Prometeu da Era Moderna, roubando o fogo dos céus e trazendo uma tocha humana para o homem.

A humanidade, porém, ainda não estava pronta para essa dádiva, e Horton foi desprezado por criar uma ameaça em potencial.

PHILLIPS
ANTES QUE A COMUNIDADE CIENTÍFICA DESSE CABO DA MINHA VIDA, MEU PAI AMENIZOU A PRESSÃO PÚBLICA ME ENCLAUSURANDO.
FUI COLOCADO NUM LAR ADOTIVO FEITO DE PEDRA...
...LONGE DO OXIGÊNIO...
...LONGE DAS MULTIDÕES.
ALGUNS ESPERAVAM QUE MEU APRISIONAMENTO FOSSE PERMANENTE, MAS MEU PAI TINHA OUTROS PLANOS PARA MIM.
ELE PROVIDENCIOU UM MEIO PARA QUE EU FOSSE EDUCADO ENQUANTO ESTIVESSE CONFINADO EM MINHA TUMBA DE CONCRETO ATÉ QUE CHEGASSE O DIA EM QUE ELE PUDESSE CURAR OU CONTROLAR MEU EXTRAORDINÁRIO PROBLEMA.

PASSEI ESSE TEMPO, QUE PARECEU DURAR ANOS, NUM ESTADO VIRTUALMENTE INANIMADO.

APRENDI O NOME DE OBJETOS QUE NÃO PODIA VER, TOCAR OU CHEIRAR.

EU PODIA APENAS IMAGINÁ-LOS E, SEM QUALQUER REFERÊNCIA, FOI QUASE IMPOSSÍVEL DESDE O PRINCÍPIO.

APRENDI MUITA COISA SOBRE O MUNDO, E AINDA MAIS SOBRE A DOR DE UMA SOLIDÃO FORÇADA.

ESTAVA CIENTE DE TUDO...

...SEM ENTENDER NADA.

EU MAL PODIA COMPREENDER O QUE HAVIA ACONTECIDO COMIGO NO DECORRER DA MINHA CURTA EXISTÊNCIA.

FUI ARRANCADO DE MEU ÚTERO ORIGINAL E ARREMESSADO NUM MUNDO ONDE CADA BARULHO ERA COMO UM GRITO.

SAÍ DA SEGURANÇA DA ESCURIDÃO PARA UM LUGAR ONDE A LUZ BRILHAVA EM TODAS AS DIREÇÕES.

E, ENQUANTO TOMAVA CONTATO COM TODAS ESSAS SENSAÇÕES...

...ENQUANTO MEUS OLHOS, MEUS OUVIDOS E MINHA PELE SE CONCENTRAVAM NELAS...

...ELAS SUMIRAM.

UMA VEZ MAIS, VOLTEI À ESCURIDÃO E AO SILÊNCIO, QUE JÁ NÃO ME CONFORTAVAM COMO ANTES.

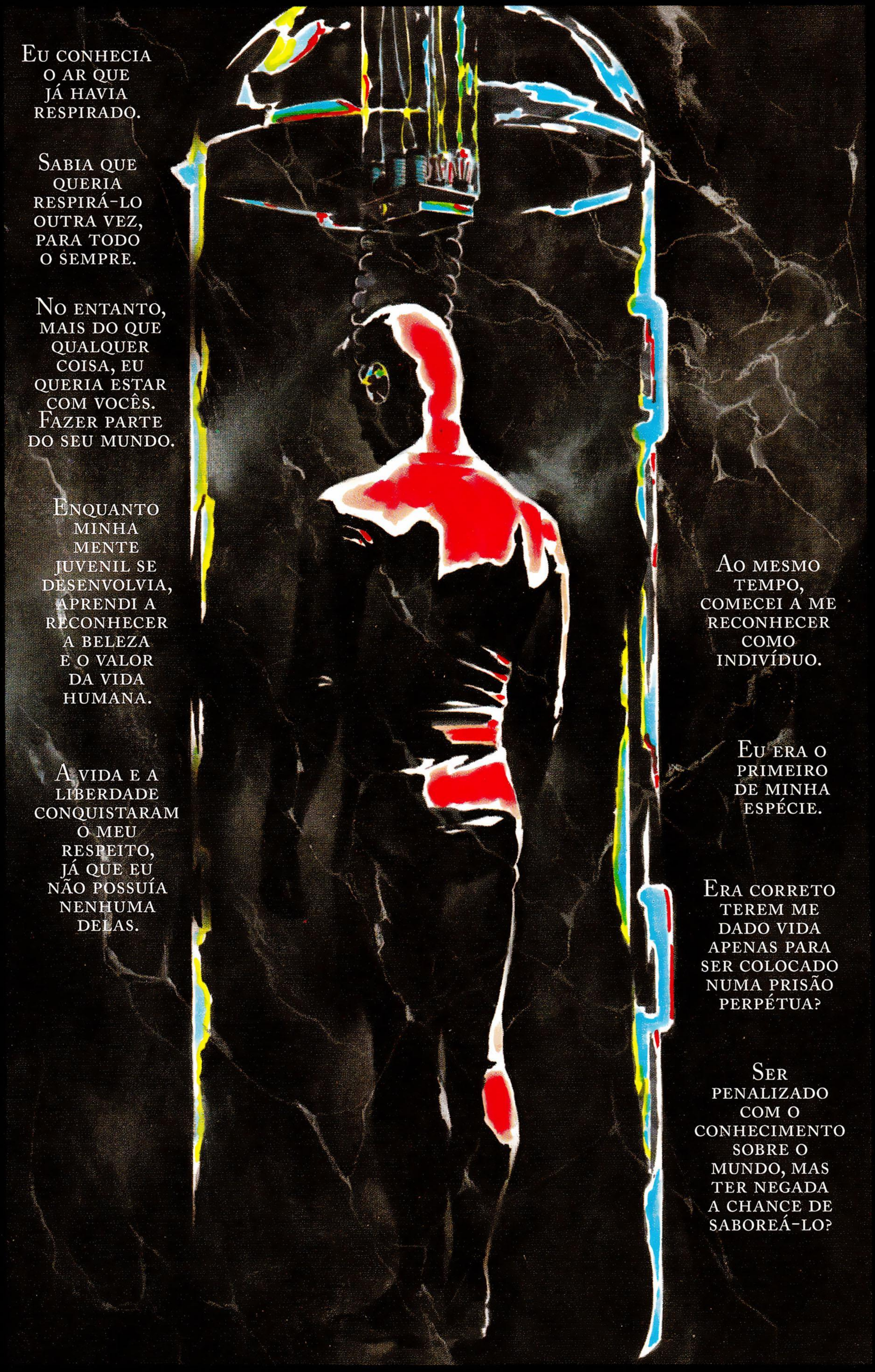
AGORA, NÃO PASSAVAM DE LEMBRANÇAS ZOMBETEIRAS DE TUDO O QUE ME FORA NEGADO.

MEU PAI ME TROUXE A ESTE MUNDO E ME MANTEVE VIVO QUANDO OUTROS TERIAM ME DESTRUÍDO.

POR QUE, ENTÃO, ELE ME INFLIGIU ESTE TORMENTO? POR QUE CONSENTIU EM ME ABANDONAR TÃO FACILMENTE?

SERIA POSSÍVEL QUE, ENQUANTO EU O VIA COMO UM PAI...

...ELE NÃO ME VIA COMO FILHO?



Eu conhecia o ar que já havia respirado.

Sabia que queria respirá-lo outra vez, para todo o sempre.

No entanto, mais do que qualquer coisa, eu queria estar com vocês. Fazer parte do seu mundo.

Enquanto minha mente juvenil se desenvolvia, aprendi a reconhecer a beleza e o valor da vida humana.

A vida e a liberdade conquistaram o meu respeito, já que eu não possuía nenhuma delas.

Ao mesmo tempo, comecei a me reconhecer como indivíduo.

Eu era o primeiro de minha espécie.

Era correto terem me dado vida apenas para ser colocado numa prisão perpétua?

Ser penalizado com o conhecimento sobre o mundo, mas ter negada a chance de saboreá-lo?

A SALVAÇÃO FINALMENTE VEIO.

UMA PEQUENA RACHADURA EM MINHA CARAPAÇA DE CONCRETO DEIXOU ENTRAR O DOCE AR QUE POR TANTO TEMPO DESEJEI

NUM MOMENTO ABRUPTO, UMA EXPLOSÃO CATACLÍSMICA DE CORES, LUZ E SOM...

...E EU ESTAVA LIVRE.

COMO NO MOMENTO EM QUE NASCI.

EU GRITEI.

ESTAVA FINALMENTE LIVRE PARA RESPIRAR DE NOVO... PARA SENTIR O ÍMPETO DO CALOR ANIMAR MEU CORPO.

MEU PAI TENTOU ME CHAMAR DE VOLTA...

...MAS, SABENDO O QUE ELE HAVIA ME NEGADO, EU FUGI...

...COM MEDO DE SER APRISIONADO MAIS UMA VEZ.

CORRI CEGAMENTE PELA NOITE, E VOLTEI A EXPERIMENTAR O PÂNICO E A PERPLEXIDADE QUE MINHA APARÊNCIA AMEAÇADORA CAUSAVA NAS PESSOAS.

DESDE ENTÃO, APRENDI A CONTROLAR MEU PODER...

...E PASSEI A SIGNIFICAR ALGO MUITO DIFERENTE PARA ESTA SOCIEDADE, À QUAL AGORA PERTENÇO.

DE LÁ PRA CÁ, DESCOBRI QUE NÃO SOU A ÚNICA ANOMALIA EXISTENTE...

...MAS, NA NOITE EM QUE ME LIBERTEI, EM 1939, ESTE MUNDO TEVE SEU PRIMEIRO CONFRONTO COM O FANTÁSTICO.

A ERA DE OURO DOS MILAGRES TINHA COMEÇADO E, NOS ANOS QUE ESTAVAM POR VIR, O MUNDO VIRIA A ACEITAR A PRESENÇA DO SOBRENATURAL E DO EXTRAORDINÁRIO COMO PARTE DA REALIDADE.

Above: Cover of Marvel Comics #1 (1939), featuring the original Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner.

ALEX ROSS

FIRST OF ALL, I SHOULD probably come right out and say I have kind of a difficult time judging between fantasy and reality, so until I get my medication, this is my story, and I'm sticking to it.

I had just completed my latest masterpiece, *The Iliad* (which, people tell me, actually came out as a *Terminator* mini-series for another company) and was all set to do a sequel, to be called *Beezus and Ramona*, when something caught my eye. The cover I had drawn for *The Iliad* (sorry: *Terminator*) involved a fiery man walking through a wall of flame. It struck me: this fellow looked like the Human Torch. That's when I hit upon the idea for an anthology title called *Marvel*. I envisioned a book of short, unrelated stories (I'd tried creating complex stories in the past, but they just made my head hurt) with painted artwork.

I showed my Torch samples to Kurt Busiek, a fellow inmate who was known to dabble in writing (mostly threatening letters to foreign dignitaries that he felt had somehow wronged him). He took one look and said, "Alex, when you said a *painted* series, I didn't realize you meant *finger* painting." Some weeks later, when Kurt finally regained consciousness, I asked him what he thought of my story a second time. To my surprise, he removed the tube from his throat long enough to nod weakly in approval, and we were on our way.

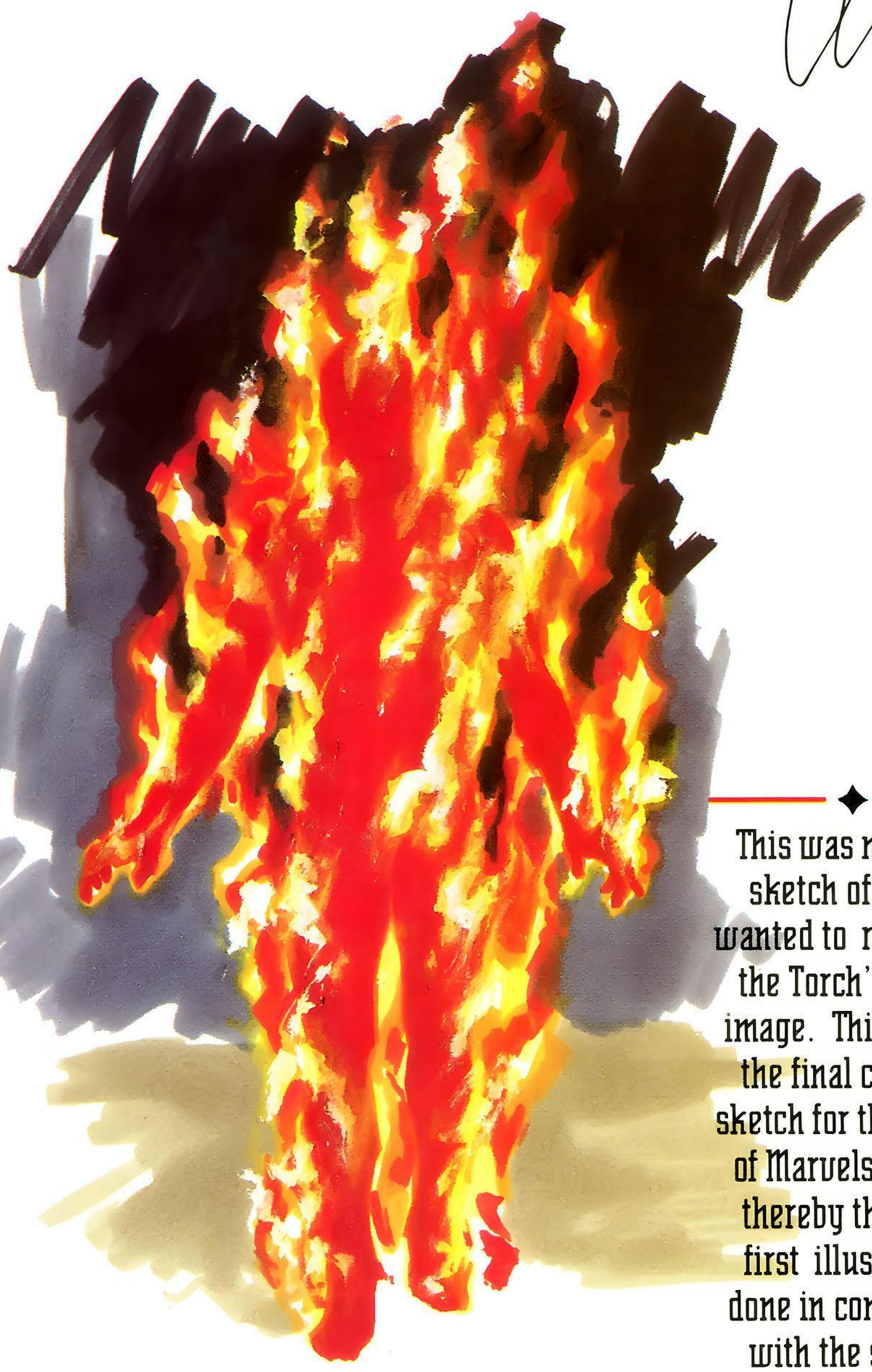
Early on, we decided to change the focus of the book from an anthology of unrelated tales to one main storyline, about a zany madcap comic book editor who worked his artists to the point of death and then made millions off their creations. I'll never forget how excited Kurt was when he raced over to my cot and began reading his first draft: *"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan his stately pleasure dome decree..."* Editor Marc McLaurin suggested we change that, and a few other things as well – until Kurt pinned his arms back and stuffed the gag in his mouth. I grabbed the red-hot poker I always carry with me and whispered in a low, menacing voice: "Hey, Marc...let's play a little game we call 'Famous EC Covers.'" Within the hour, Marc was firmly on our side, and I'm told that, thanks to his recent therapy, he only cries himself to sleep intermittently.

The story presented over the previous pages was done in 1990 and is quite different from *Marvels* in that the point of view is strictly that of the Torch. I did the artwork based on my original script and asked my writer friend Steve Darnall (then a frustrated musician, now a frustrated editor at *Hero Illustrated)* to revamp my sloppy narrative, only to turn the tables on him by rewriting his work, and giving us both something that we can look back on as the typical "early effort."

I've included a few original sketches, featuring characters that I feel fit under the umbrella title of "truly original creations." Take a look at what text exists on those pages, and you'll get an idea of my *real* writing skills. The rest of the book is taken up with some random sketches from *Marvels'* gestation period.

Now, all these treasures are resting comfortably in your hands.
As for me, I have to go – it's time to go run around the yard!

Alex



This was my first sketch of how I wanted to represent the Torch's fiery image. This is also the final concept sketch for the cover of Marvels #1, and thereby the very first illustration done in connection with the series.

IMAGES

This page: Promotional cover for Marvel Age.

MARVELS

X-WOMEN

MARVELS

MARVELS

GRIMM

DOOM

MARVELS

STARK

WIDOW

MARVELS

STAGES

PANTHER

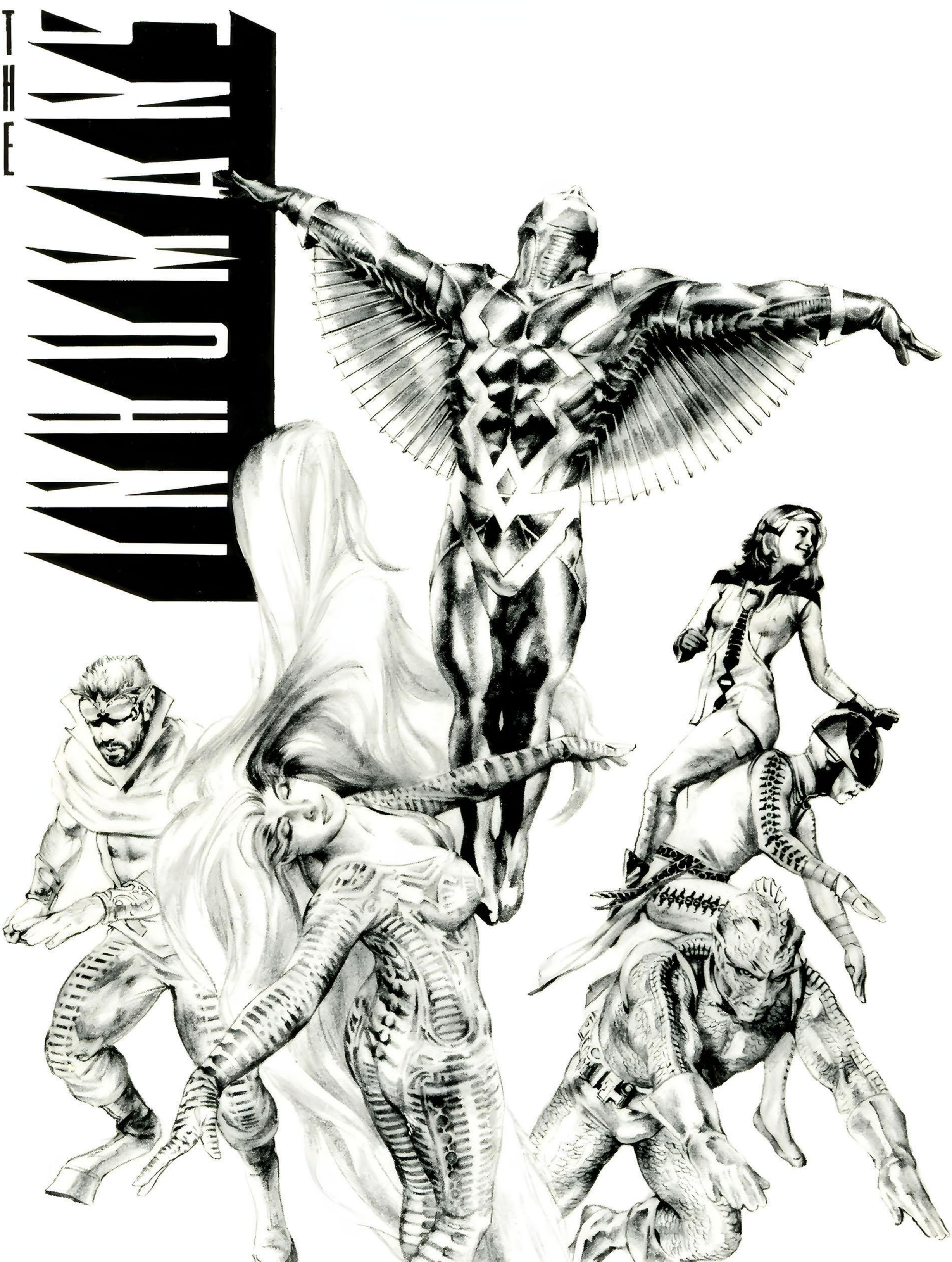
ETC.
MARVELS

These illustrations were done for a proposal that Kurt and I did in 1991 for the regular Iron Man series. Opposite: The Iron Man of 2020.

MARVELS

IRON MAN

THE IMAGE



MARVELS

MARVELS

HOBGOBLIN

MARVELS

X-WOMEN

✦Continued from inside front cover...

But I paid him. And Alex remembered that.

Some time later, after I'd become a full-time freelancer, Alex tracked me down to show me these wonderful pictures. He had an idea for an anthology, and I was the only guy he knew with Marvel connections. I listened to his idea and said, "Hey, the art's great. But you got no concept there. They'll reject it."

We tried a few other things together. Some work for another publisher. A proposal for IRON MAN. Meanwhile, the art that Alex had first shown me had wended its way to Marcus McLaurin, who promptly hired Alex for a HELLRAISER story, and asked, "What's this stuff with the Marvel characters? It's gorgeous – can you do a proposal?"

We did a proposal. And, just like I predicted, they rejected it.

Well, no, they didn't *reject* it, exactly, but Tom DeFalco asked for some basic revisions that spurred us to throw out that first proposal and start over. But they bought the next one and we did the series, and you've seen that.

So, now you can see what kicked it off. Now you can see why I shuffle my feet and cough when people tell me what a great story MARVELS was. I mean, all I had to do was write stuff that would do justice to the art.

✦

Say, wait a minute. That *was* a secret origin. This *is* a special story that helps you understand the regular series better. And if not trading cards, it's a series of breathtaking illustrations that you'll want to keep as a set for a long time.

Blasted Zero issues. Never mind.

MARVELS
BOOK ZERO

ALEX ROSS
ARTIST

KURT BUSIEK
BOOK CONCEPT

COMICRAFT
DESIGN & LETTERING

JOE KAUFMAN
COVER DESIGN & LOGO

MARCUS McLAURIN
EDITOR

TOM DeFALCO
EDITOR IN CHIEF

At right: sketch by John Romita for cover of Marvels 0.
Page opposite: promotional cover for Hero Illustrated, re-creating the cover of Amazing Fantasy #15, after Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko.

"What we'd like to do is give Marvel readers a different kind of rush — by stepping *away* from identification with the characters...

"...to show the heroes as *marvels,* in the literal sense of the word."

— from the original MARVELS proposal. Kurt Busiek, writer.

It is *the* comic event of 1994. Now, collected for the first time, see the character sketches and ideas that helped make the series an astonishing reality. Discover first-hand, in this behind-the-scenes look, the new spin that talented painter Alex Ross and wordsmith Kurt Busiek put together, to help redefine a universe.

MARVELS

Now that you know the magic never ended, find out how this very special chapter began.

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